

*Take That, Caesar*, by Jim Larson

Art selection and commentary by [Lil Copan](#) in the [May 9, 2018](#) issue



Minnesota artist Jim Larson describes *Take That, Caesar* as a mash-up of the two Gospel texts: one about the temple tax and one about rendering unto Caesar (Matt. 17:24-27; Matt. 22:21). Like other works on biblical themes by Larson, this painting combines dark humor, dramatic lighting, contorted figures, and what might be called narrative adventure. Viewers don't encounter the biblical story they expect and are likely to feel that they (and the sacred texts) are being stretched or undermined. The coin in the fish's mouth (Matt. 17:27) is generally seen by commentators as some kind of symbol, but its precise meaning is uncertain. "That pretty well captures the mood of the painting," says the painter. Whatever the symbolism, the story of "a

crazed fisherman paying his taxes to the empire/authority through sleight of hand and a little mischief” comes alive.